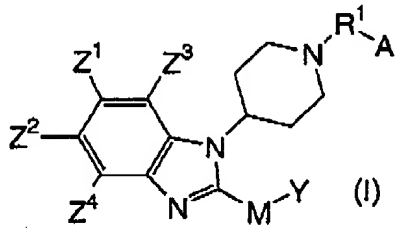
Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A compound of the following formula:



(I)

or a salt thereof, wherein

R^1 is selected from the group consisting of (C_3-C_{11})cycloalkyl, (C_6-C_{16})bicycloalkyl, (C_6-C_{16})tricycloalkyl and (C_8-C_{16})tetracyclyoalkyl, wherein said groups are partially saturated, fully saturated or fully unsaturated and are optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo, hydroxy, (C_1-C_5)alkyl and (C_3-C_7)cycloalkyl;

A is attached to the same carbon atom of R^1, that is also attached to the nitrogen atom of the piperidine ring, and is selected from the group consisting of (C_1-C_7)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_2-C_5)alkenyl; (C_2-C_5)alkynyl; phenyl-(C_1-C_5)alkyl optionally substituted at the phenyl moiety with 1 to 3 substituents; hydroxy-(C_1-C_4)alkyl; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy-(C=O); aryl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents; and an aromatic or non-aromatic heterocyclic ring comprising four to ten ring atoms wherein one to four ring atoms are independently selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur and said aromatic or non-aromatic heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents, and the phenyl moiety in the substituents attached to said phenyl moiety in the phenyl-(C_1-C_5)alkyl, aryl, or heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-;

di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH;

M is selected from the group consisting of a single covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, SO, SO_2, CO, NH, N[(C_1-C_6)alkyl], CONH and NHCO;

Y is selected from the following:

(a) 4- to 12-membered bicyclic-carbocyclic rings wherein said bicyclic-carbocyclic rings are optionally substituted with 1 to 6 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo, hydroxy, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH, wherein the optionally substituted (C_1-C_4)alkyl are attached to the carbon or nitrogen atoms and other substituents are attached to the carbon atoms in the bicyclic-heterocyclic ring; with the proviso that said bicyclic-carbocyclic ring is not a benzofused ring;

(b) 4- to 12-membered bicyclic-heterocyclic rings wherein 1 to 6 ring atoms are independently selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur wherein said bicyclic-heterocyclic rings are optionally substituted with 1 to 6 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally ~~optionally~~ substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, hydroxy, (C_1-C_3)alkyl-SO_2NH_2- and $NH_2C(=O)NH$-; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; aryl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and (C_1-C_4)alkoxy; benzyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and (C_1-C_4)alkoxy; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4) alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-

; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH, wherein the optionally substituted (C_1-C_4)alkyl are attached to the carbon or nitrogen atoms and other substituents are attached to the carbon atoms in the bicyclic-heterocyclic ring; with the proviso that said bicyclic-heterocyclic ring is not a benzofused ring;

(c) 5- to 17 membered spirocarbocyclic rings wherein said spirocarbocyclic rings are optionally substituted with 1 to 6 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH;

(d) 5- to 17-membered spiroheterocyclic rings wherein 1 to 6 ring atoms are independently selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur, wherein said spiroheterocyclic rings are optionally substituted with 1 to 6 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl])-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH; and

Z^1, Z^2, Z^3 and Z^4 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, halo, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkylsulfonyl; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; carboxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-COO-; amino; NH_2CO-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-SO_2-NH-; phenyl and naphthyl.

2. (Previously Amended) A compound according to Claim 1 or a salt thereof, wherein

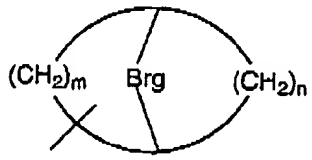
R^1 is (C_3-C_{11})cycloalkyl, wherein said cycloalkyl is partially saturated, fully saturated or fully unsaturated and is optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo, hydroxy, (C_1-C_5)alkyl and (C_3-C_7)cycloalkyl;

A is attached to the same carbon atom of R^1, that is also attached to the nitrogen atom of the piperidine ring, and is selected from the group consisting of (C_1-C_7)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_2-C_5)alkenyl; (C_2-C_5)alkynyl; hydroxy-(C_1-C_4)alkyl; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy-(C=O); aryl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents; and an aromatic or non-aromatic heterocyclic ring comprising four to six ring atoms wherein one to two ring atoms are independently selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulfur and said aromatic or non-aromatic heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents; and the substituents said aryl or heterocyclic wherein each of said is optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents, and the substituents attached to said aryl or heterocyclic ring are independently selected from halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH- and (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-;

M is selected from group consisting of a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, SO_2, CO, NH, N [(C_1-C_6)alkyl], CONH and NHCO;

Y is selected from the following:

(a) bicyclic rings represented by formula Y1:

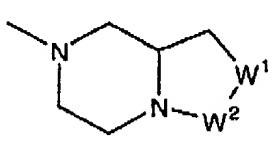


Y1

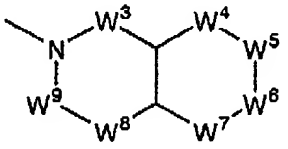
wherein m and n are independently 1, 2, 3 or 4; Brg is selected from $(CH_2)_p$ wherein p is 0, 1 or 2, and N-(C_1-C_4)alkyl; and Y1 is optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituents

independently selected from the group consisting of hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; oxo and =N-OH;

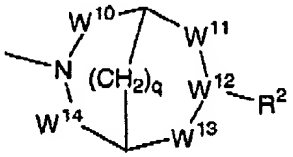
(b) 6- to 10-membered bicyclic-heterocyclic rings, containing 1 to 4 hetero atoms in the ring, represented by formula Y2, Y3 or Y4:



Y2



Y3



Y4

wherein

W^1 is selected from CH_2, CH_2CH_2, O, S and NH;

W^2 is selected from CH_2, O, S, NH and C=O;

W^3 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, NH and C(=O)-NH;

W^4 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S and NH;

W^5 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, $CH(CH_2OH)$, $CH(CH_2NHSO_2CH_3)$, $CH(CH_2NHC(=O)NH_2)$, CH_2CH_2, O, S, NH and C(=O);

W^6 is selected from CH_2, O, S, NH and N[(C_1-C_4)alkyl];

W^7 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, NH and C(=O);

W^8 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S and NH;

W^9 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, NH CH_2CH_2 and C(=O);

W^{10}, W^{11}, W^{13} and W^{14} are independently selected from covalent bond, CH_2, O, S, and NH;

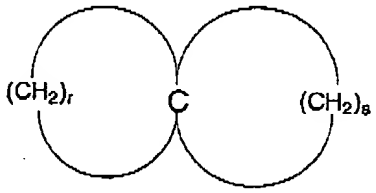
W^{12} is selected from CH and N;

q is 1 or 2; and

R^2 is selected from hydrogen, (C_1-C_4)alkyl and amino; and

said bicyclic-heterocyclic rings of formula Y2, Y3 or Y4 is optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; aryl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and (C_1-C_4)alkoxy; benzyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and (C_1-C_4)alkoxy; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; oxo and =N-OH;

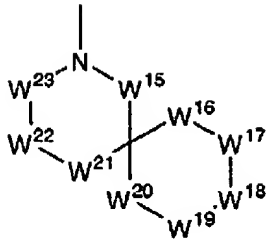
(c) spirocarbocyclic rings represented by formula Y5:



Y5

wherein r and s are independently 2, 3, 4 or 5; and said spirocarbocyclic ring or formula Y5 is optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; oxo and =N-OH; and either of monocyclic carbocyclic ring in Y5 is optionally fused to a benzene or (C_4-C_6)carbocyclic ring;

(d) 10- to 15-membered spiroheterocyclic rings, containing 1 to 4 hetero atoms in the ring, represented by formula Y6:



Y6

wherein

W^{15}, W^{16}, W^{17}, W^{18}, W^{19}, W^{20} and W^{23} are independently selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond CH_2, O, S and NH;

W^{21} is selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond CH_2, O, S, NH and N[(C_1-C_4)alkyl];

W^{22} is selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond CH_2, O, S, NH and C(=O);

said spiroheterocyclic ring of formula Y6 is optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of halo; hydroxy; (C_1-C_4)alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkoxy optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; phenyl; benzyl; -CHO; cyano; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-; NH_2-CO-; NH_2-CH_2-; amino; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-; di[(C_1-C_4)alkyl]-N-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-CO-NH-; (C_1-C_4)alkyl-NH-CO-; hydrazino; azido; ureido; amidino; guanidino; oxo and =N-OH; and optionally fused to a cyclohexane, benzene or pyridine ring; and

Z^1, Z^2, Z^3 and Z^4 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and halo.

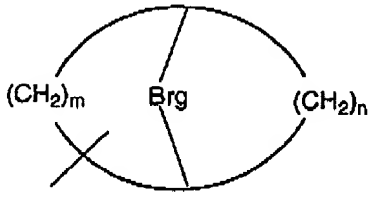
3. (Original) A compound according to Claim 2 or a salt thereof, wherein

R^1 is selected from the group consisting of (C_3-C_{11})cycloalkyl;

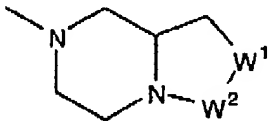
A is attached to the carbon atom of R^1, which is attached to the nitrogen atom of the piperidine ring, and selected from the group consisting of (C_1-C_7)alkyl, hydroxy-(C_1-C_2)alkyl, (C_1-C_4)alkoxy-(C=O), (C_2-C_5)alkenyl, phenyl and naphthyl;

M is selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond, CH_2, O, SO_2, CO, NH, N[(C_1-C_6)alkyl], and NHCO;

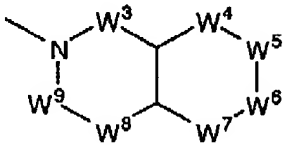
Y is selected from bicyclic rings represented by formula Y1; 6- to 10-membered bicyclic-heterocyclic rings, containing 1 to 4 hetero atoms in the ring, represented by formula Y2, Y3 and Y4; and 10- to 15-membered spiroheterocyclic rings, containing 1 to 4 hetero atoms in the ring, represented by formula Y6:



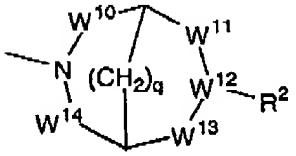
Y1



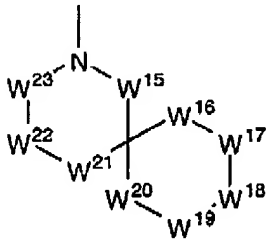
Y2



Y3



Y4



Y6

wherein

m and n are independently 1, 2, 3 or 4;

Brg is N-(C_1-C_4)alkyl;

W^1 is selected from CH_2, CH_2CH_2, O and NH;

W^2 is selected from CH_2 and C=O;

W^3 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2 and C(=O)-NH;

W^4 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2 and O;

W^5 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, $CH(CH_2OH)$, $CH(CH_2NHSO_2CH_3)$, $CH(CH_2NHC(=O)NH_2)$, CH_2CH_2 and C(=O);

W^6 is selected from CH_2, NH and N[(C_1-C_4)alkyl];

W^7 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2 and C(=O);

W^8 is selected from a covalent bond and CH_2;

W^9 is selected from a covalent bond, CH_2, CH_2CH_2 and C(=O);

W^{10}, W^{11}, W^{13} and W^{14} are independently selected from a covalent bond and CH_2;

W^{12} is selected from CH and N;

q is 1 or 2; ;

R^2 is selected from hydrogen, $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl and amino;

W^{15}, W^{16}, W^{17}, W^{18}, W^{19}, W^{20} and W^{23} are independently selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond and CH_2;

W^{21} is selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond CH_2, NH and N[$(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl];

W^{22} is selected from the group consisting of a covalent bond CH_2 and C(=O);

said group of formula of Y2, Y3 or Y4 is optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituent independently selected from the group consisting of $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl; aryl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkoxy; and benzyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl optionally substituted with 1 to 3 halo and $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkoxy; and

said group of formula Y6 is optionally fused to a cyclohexane, benzene or pyridine ring; and optionally substituted with 1 to 4 substituents independently selected from the group consisting of $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl, $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkoxy and aryl;

Z^1 and Z^2 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and halo; and Z^3 and Z^4 are both hydrogen.

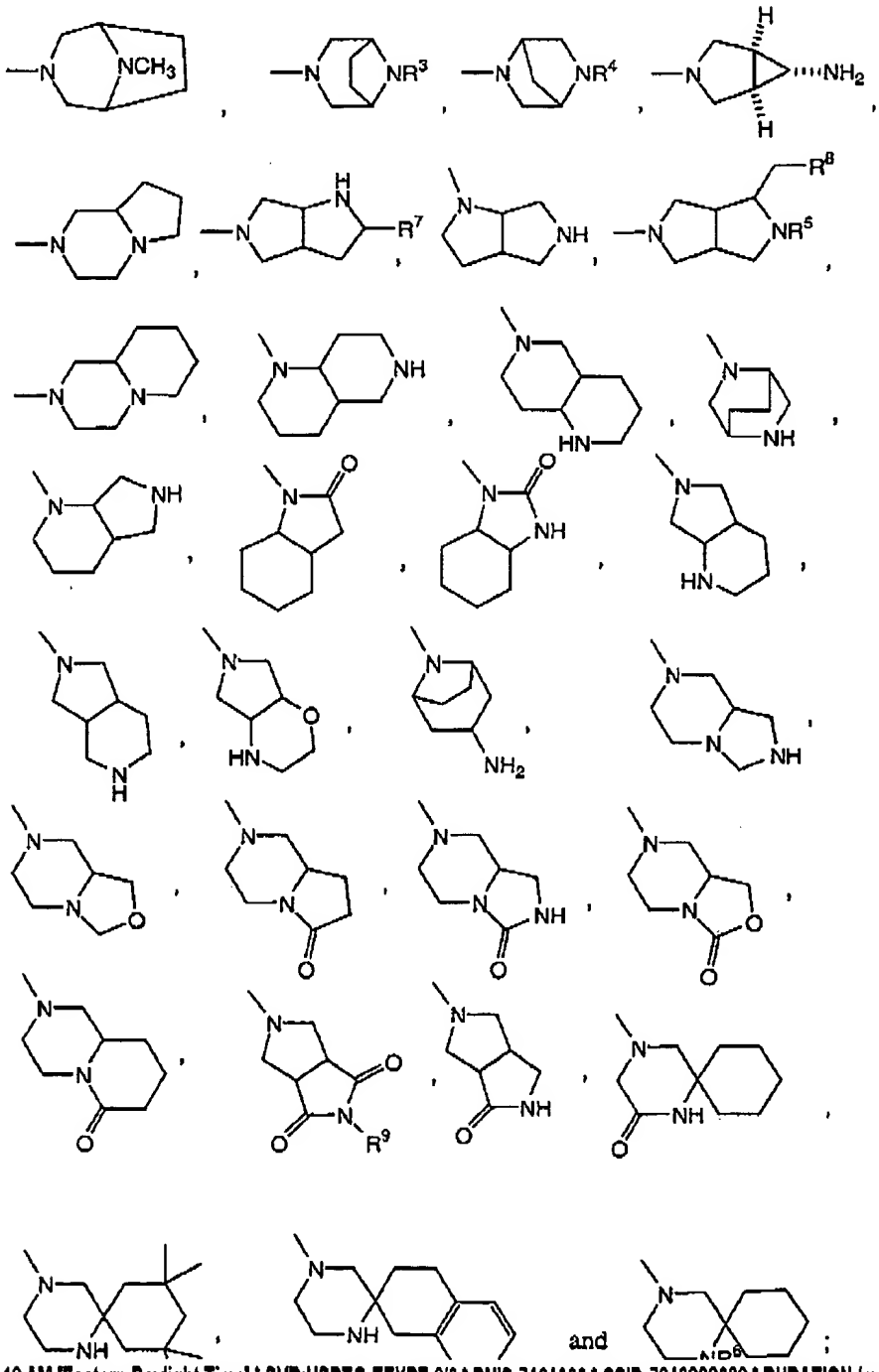
4. (Original) A compound according to Claim 3 or a salt thereof, wherein

R^1 is $(C_6$-$C_{10})$cycloalkyl;

A is attached to the carbon atom of R^1, which is attached to the nitrogen atom of the piperidine ring, and is selected from the group consisting of $(C_1$-$C_7)$alkyl and, phenyl l;

M is selected from group consisting of a covalent bond, CH_2, O, SO_2, CO, NH, N[(C_1-C_6)alkyl] and NHCO,

Y is selected from:



and

;

wherein R^3, R^4, R^5, R^6, R^7 and R^9 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and $(C_1$-$C_4)$alkyl;

R^8 is selected from the group consisting of hydroxy, $NHSO_2CH_3$ and $NHC(=O)NH_2$; and

Z^1, Z^2, Z^3 and Z^4 are all hydrogen.

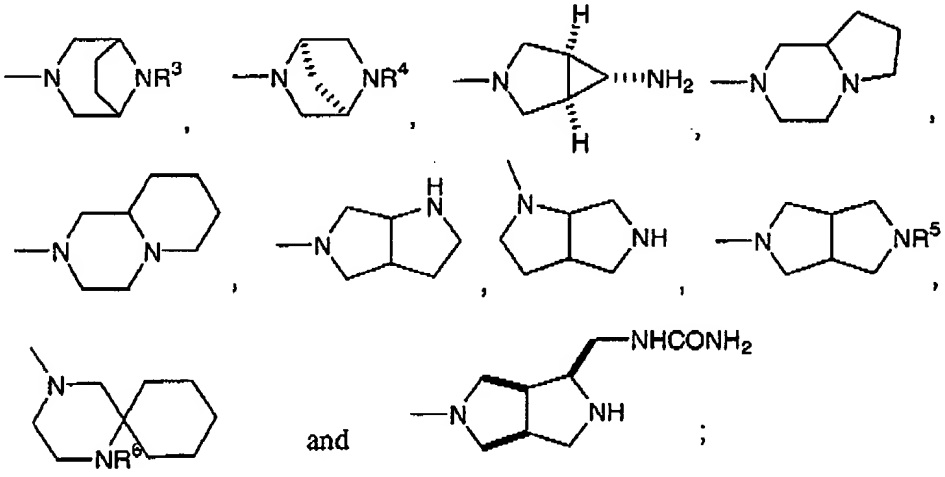
5. (Original) A compound according to Claim 4 or a salt thereof, wherein

R^1 is $(C_7$-$C_9)$cycloalkyl;

A is attached to the carbon atom of R^1, which is attached to the nitrogen atom of the piperidine ring, and is selected from the group consisting of methyl and phenyl;

M is selected from group consisting of a covalent bond, CH_2, O, CO, NH, $N[(C_1$-$C_6)$alkyl] and NHCO,

Y is selected from:



wherein R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 are independently selected from the group consisting of hydrogen and (C_1-C_4)alkyl; and

Z^1, Z^2, Z^3 and Z^4 are all hydrogen.

6. (Currently Amended) A compound according to Claim 1 selected from

4-{1-[1-(1-methylcyclooctyl)-4-piperidinyl]-1*H*-benzimidazole-2-yl}-1,4-diazaspiro[5.5]undecane;

2-hexahydropyrrolo[3,4-c]pyrrol-2(1*H*)-yl-1-[1-(1-methylcyclooctyl)-4-piperidinyl]-1*H*-benzimidazole;

2-(3,8-Diazabicyclo[3.2.1]oct-3-yl)-[1-(1-methylcyclooctyl)-4-piperidinyl]-1*H*-benzimidazole; and

N-[(1SR, 3aRS, 6aSR)-5-{1-[1-(1-Methylcyclooctyl)-4-piperidinyl]-1*H*-benzimidazol-2-yl}octahydropyrrolo[3,4-*c*]pyrrole-1-~~ylmethl~~ylmethyl]urea; and a salt thereof.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Amended) A method for treating a disorder or condition in a mammal, where the disorder or condition is selected from the group consisting of neuropathic pain, inflammation-related hyperalgesia, anxiety, stress disorders, or for anesthetizing a mammal or enhancing analgesic function in a mammal comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of a compound of Claim 1 or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

11. (New) A pharmaceutical composition comprising an amount of a compound according to Claim 1, or pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.